

THE

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Presbyterian Sham,

OR, A

COMMENTARY

Upon the

New Old Answer

Of the Assembly of

DIVINES

TO

Dr. *STILLINGFLEET'S*

SERMON.

Dolus an Virtus ? —

LONDON, Printed in the Year, MDCLXXX.

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THE Presbyterian SHAM &c.

I Perceive *Shamming* the World in Print, is become not only a modish, but venerable Accomplishment: For otherwise, in the name of wonder how comes it to pass, that some *Nonconformists* should unequally yoke themselves with the Sham Letter of the *Black Box*? Verily Sirs, this does not become the Heads of the *Sober Party* to write as if they were drunk or mad. *An Answer to a Sermon Preach'd by Dr. Stillingfleet!* Sure, said I, these are very nimble *Gentlemen* to be so quick upon the *Doctor*, to knock him down to rights like *Lightning*! Well, fair and softly may go far, *quoth I*; but a quick dispatch is the grace of the business; 'tis well if it prove so: but this is not all, here's *Miracle* upon *Wonder*; here's a *Sermon* kill'd five Years before it was born; an *Answer* by the way of *Prophecy*, an *Answer* which will serve against all that ever was or, will be, or may be, or shall be, or can be said against *Nonconformists*.

Well, my Masters, you are great *Thaumaturgicks*, but I hope a Scruple of Conscience may be admitted to kiss the Toe of your *Infallibilities*, and to offer a few Scraps and Shreads of *Nonconformity* to your consideration, *petimus, damusque vicissim*; and therefore first for the Front of the Book, I must take the liberty to tell you, that you do not say either *solum verum*, or *totum veritatis*, and you know what that is in *English*. Are they *Ministers of Christ*, so are we. Now say I, neither so, nor so; for they are *Ministers of Christ* Episcopally ordained, so are not you; You are *Ministers* of that profligate Wretch *Hugh Peters's* ordaining, who for any thing I know, was not a *Presbyter*, so are not they. Now *Ordination* having gone through the hands of

Bishops for 1500 Years and upwards *nemine contradicente*, they who can have it but will not, but despise and hate *Bishops* Root and Branch, are not for the *Ministers of Christ*, as they who submit to those whom God hath set over them.

But that I may pull off the Vizard from those *Bugbears* which these *Jack-straws* and *Watt Tylers* have made to fright people into *Nonconformity*, I will come yet a little closer to them: *We are*, say they, *to seek Unity, and preach the Gospel*; but the second being the greater Duty, must give place to the first. See the accurate Nicety of this little *Assembly of Divines*, and how logically they contra-distinguish these things, making two of vvhhat God has made but one: for is not preaching one God, one Faith, one Baptism, one Christ over-all, one Fold, and one Shepherd preaching Unity, is not one Article of the Faith, *I believe the Communion of Saints*, and is not all this preaching the Gospel? If your *Morals*, *Gentlemen*, and your *Divinity* be no better than your *Logick*, e'en go your vvays for *Church-men*.

But the men have reason for vvhhat they say I vvarrant you; *Is there not now a Cause?* Yes, I assure you, several, the *Good Old Cause*, and several *Suckers*. The *Eternal welfare of thousands of Souls depends upon their Preaching*: Yes, though it be *Dis-union*, *Nonconformity* and *Tolerati-on*. Suppose novv all these painful *Labourers* dead and gone; vvhhat, must all the World be damn'd for vvant of their *Preaching*? *Durus Sermo!* But pray tell us, do not the *Episcopal-men* preach the Gospel? And may not *Salvation* be had in *Communion* of our Church? If it may, then there is no such danger, but in mens neglect of the means; if it cannot, then do they *Unchurch* all our *Parochial Churches*, which is a *Crime*, they say, they could not ansvver before God, nor ever intended: So that if these *honest Conventicles*, as they call them, and the vvhole Tribe of *Nonconformists* vvere laid aside, there vvould be no such danger to mens *Bodies*, *Souls*, or *Estates*; but a great deal of safety: For under the shadow of the *Elders*, there grows a sort of *Factious* People call'd *Republicans*, who are for fighting, plundering, sequestering, and all that.

But this is further supported by a *Second-ly*, That it is not in contempt of Authority that they preach, and the People hear. Sure they take us for *Gudgeons* that will swallow a Hook without a Bait: The next turn will be, they do it in obedience; it is a way of arguing peculiar to the Party: they never fought against the King, they never did any hurt, alas, poor Souls, they are as innocent as obedient; but pray, what difference between breaking Laws, and contempt of them; you can split a hair I know, and

and for once shew us your Skill; and now for an Excuse for the People, for greater Edification --- Comparisons are odious among all People but *Non-Cons*, who live by ill Neighbourhoods, and have a great *Talent* at prailing themselves, though a wiser man tells them, *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth*. Well, but the good people hear them, to witness they are not accessory to their *Ejection*! Sure it is ill halting before Cripples: What, are there none that can remember beyond the sad St. *Bartholomew*? Are the Thumbs and Toes; the Heads and Hands that *Adonibezek* cut off, quite forgotten? Ah! the poor innocent *Nonconformists*! they never ejected the Bishops and Conformists, the Clergy and Laity out of their Estates; they never sequestred, beheaded, hang'd, starved, banished, or imprisoned any body for *Conscience*, not they. Come, for shame, be as honest as this same *Canaanitish King*, *Judges* 1. 7. As I have done, so God hath required me.

But there is another *Lion* in the way, unfeigned Assent and Consent to all and every thing. Why, what is the matter my *Masters*, that you cannot do this? *Oh Sirs, it is first something they cannot tell what, an aliquid auri*. But Secondly, something they do know. First they cannot believe the *Kalendar*. Do you understand it, Gentlemen? Or how to mend it *Astronomically*? If you do not, why do you make a Scruple of what you cannot mend? And if you do, let us see your Skill; and till then, give leave to use this till a more correct *Kalendar* is compiled. Secondly, they cannot believe the *Athanasian Creed*; why, this does no more condemn the *Greek Church* than the *Nicene*, which say, *I believe in the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son*, which in your account of *English Presbytery*, pag. 12: you say, *In all matters of Faith, Presbyterians believe whatsoever is in the Apostles and Nicene Creed*. However, I am glad you have some *Charity* for *Socrates, Plato and Seneca*. I am sure it is more than is expected from those, who pag. 15. dare not believe so well of their own Children when Baptized. Thirdly, in the Service of *Gunpowder-Treason*, 'tis said, *There are three Estates besides the King*, and this they do not, that is, they will not know. Well, would you know the true reason? If the King be one of the *three Estates*, then he is coordinate with the other two, then a War against him, maintained by the other may be lawful; then as the King may dissolve the *Parliament*, so the *Parliament* may serve the King, as the late name of a *Parliament* did; then is not the King *Supreme*, then is not the Government *Monarchical*, but a *Commonwealth*, which yet one would think they should not be so fond of, considering how their Brethren the *Independents* treated them under that Government. But the Great matter, I find, is, that they cannot disgorge the *Covenant*; alas

alas good men! *There hath passed a solemn Oath over the Nation, engaging the main Body of it to endeavour a Reformation, and must all Covenantants be kept?* I have read of some, *who had made a Covenant with Hell*, and others who made a *Holy League in France*: Let them keep their *Covenant*, which is no better than these, if they like it so well; but God keep us and the whole Nation from them and their *Covenant*, but what would you have them do? They dare not give their unfeigned Assent and Consent to the *Bible*; then I perceive *Atheists, Papists* and *Nonconformists* are Cousin-Germans, if for some Litteral Faults of Fallible Transcribers or Translators, we may be gravel'd to give unfeigned Assent and Consent to the *Infallible Scriptures*, *actum est de fide*, farewell Christianity. Among all this stuff, yet there is a sprinkling of Ingenuity, pag. 15. *We say we dare not give our Assent to the Use of any thing we never intend to perform*, which is the daily Use of *Common-Prayer* either in Publick or Private, they need not swear or subscribe this, and indeed they had better never use it than as some of them have done, who to save their Bacon, do not use, but abuse it, making such *minc's-meat* of it, that it is no wonder if they make the People abhor the Sacrifices of the Lord.

Oh but the Oath! this abhorring Oath! this is the saddest thing in the World, to abhor taking up Arms by Subjects against the King, or those Commissionated by him: that this should be Trayterous too! make the People believe this and all's undone! what a company of Knots are here found in a Rush? The true intent and meaning of this in short is, that all men ought to swear they detest and abhor all unlawful Sedition, and Rebelious taking up Arms against the King, or such as are legally Commissionated by him in lawful things, as did the late Rebels in 41. Was that a *Trayterous Rebellion*, or was it not? Pray Gentlemen answer *Categorically*, I or no: If it was, then why may we not call a Spade a Spade? If it was not, I say they are *Rebels* and *Traytors* that deny it; but it is plain, they do not like to condemn the former Actings, Outgoings for *Reformation*, or any thing that may obviate it for the Future; and my Masters, this palliating an *Old one* looks scurvily, like encouraging a *New one*; but why not abhor? Does not *David* say, *All false ways I utterly abhor*, Pl. 119. 128. well, but a Cooler, a softer word were better, for pag. 21. *A man may swear, that it is unlawful to company with another Woman as his Wife*; but what Shoals of *Nonconformists* should we have, if all the Sons of the Church were to swear they abhor it? Where by the way observe, the *Nonconformists*

conformists would not swear they abhor any Sin; now I have been taught, that what I believe I ought to do, I may swear I ought to do. Well, I find *Abhor* and *Trayterous* are very harsh words; but sure to none but those who do not hate and abhor all *Treason, privy Conspiracy and Rebellion*. This you may know is a sore place in their *Consciences*, a Gall they got, when rid by the *Rump*, and pray touch it gently, or they'll kick. I doubt they *abhor* this *Oath*, tho' for all that, and the *Subscriptions* too, because they say, *pag. 13. There has passed a Solemn Oath, viz. a Covenant over the whole Nation, engaging the main Body of it to endeavour a Reformation.*

Well, you have heard their *Arguments*, and what is now to be done? Why, these *Colemanists* tell you positively, there is nothing to be done without *Toleration, Comprehension and Indulgence*; and all must have the Benefit of it except *Papists*; very good, and they will have the Benefit of it in spite of your Teeth; how will you help your selves? They can, we know, be *Presbyterians, Independents, Fifth-Monarchy-men, Quakers, Anabaptists*, what you please; and if once there comes to be a Free Trade established, we shall never want Merchants from Rome. Well, but what shall we do for our little Sister the *Independent*? Oh very well; she shall be under the Visitation of the King, and the *Justices of the Peace*; so that I find, though *Bishops* and *Clergy-men* may not be *Justices*, yet *Justices* may have the Honour of being *Bishops*; but how our *Congregational Men* will like this, is another *Query*: For this Yoke put upon their Necks, will oblige them to a *Dependence*, destructive of their Liberty, Being, and Name of *Independents*.

But there is no doubt the Houses of *Parliament* will be induced to comply with these People for three notable Reasons. 1. Because they will make the *House of Commons* equal to the *Lords*, and both equal to the King, as must be in *coordinate Estates*. 2. Because, say they, *We see the Faws of Jesuits and Sectaries opening upon us*, and for fear they should not gape wide enough to swallow us up quick and quickly, strain them wider by a *Toleration*. 3. Because they kindly suppose, *p. 35. that all those who will oppose them in either House are Papists*. Few, say they, *there are in either House who are Protestants, without jealousy, &c.* which is a plain intimation that there are some in both Houses who are *Papists*. A Reflection which by naming no particulars, is a general *Scandal* upon all and every Member of those Honourable Houses.

I vwill not trouble my self or the Reader vwith their *explanatory* or their marginal *Annotations*, only observe, *First*, that their very *Explanations* needs a farther *Explanation*, and so you shall have these *proliick* heads bring *Superfetation* upon *Annotation*, till the *Acts of Toleration* vwould out-*svvell* the *Statute-Book*: Secondly, That *Nonconformists* are come to as great perfection in *Politiques* as *Divinity*, and therefore long, the *Gentlemen of the Long Robe* vwill be laid aside, as *Gravances of the Nation*: For they are vviser than the Government many years ago, and abler than the Council Learned in the Law, to prepare *Bills for Parliament*, and fittest to explain them vvhen they have done. The great Comfort is, they tell us, *pag. 40.* That they propose these things, as if they vvere in *Republica Platonis*, and it is hoped they vwill, if ever be enacted either there, or in *Sir Tho. More's Utopia*: For,

*From Presbyters Laws,
And the Good Old Cause,
From the Jesuit's Jaws,
And the Fanaticks Paws,
Libera nos Domine.*

FINIS.